Shared Learning Environments for PSW Education

The Living Classroom Implementation Guide for Colleges and Long-Term Care Homes

www.livingclassroom.ca
Acknowledgements

This implementation guide reflects the experiences of Schlegel Villages and Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in developing, implementing and evaluating their first two Living Classrooms, at the Village of Riverside Glen (Guelph, Ontario) and the Village at University Gates (Waterloo, Ontario).

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## Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AODA</td>
<td>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>Classroom Assessment Technique</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAP</td>
<td>Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Living Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTC</td>
<td>Long-Term Care, also known as nursing homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTCU</td>
<td>Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCQAS</td>
<td>Ontario College Quality Assurance Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN</td>
<td>Practical Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>Post-Secondary Educator</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSW</td>
<td>Personal Support Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOPs</td>
<td>Standard Operating Protocols</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNH</td>
<td>Teaching Nursing Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHMIS</td>
<td>Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSIB</td>
<td>Workplace Safety Insurance Board</td>
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Our Motivation

Together, Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning and Schlegel Villages envisioned a new kind of educational experience for students whose career path will lead them to work with older adults in long-term care (LTC) homes.

The motivation for this initiative was a desire to increase the number of Personal Support Worker (PSW) and Practical Nursing (PN) graduates to meet workforce demands in LTC homes in Guelph, Ontario. LTC homes were finding it more and more difficult to recruit passionate, competent, and confident graduates to work in LTC.

We saw this gap as an opportunity to collaborate to develop a new option for education and workforce exposure, whereby both a LTC home and a community college (hereafter referred to as a Post-Secondary Educator or PSE) could come together for student immersion into the setting of a well-operating LTC home. The result of this innovative undertaking led to work-ready students highly qualified for employment in LTC homes upon graduation.

Today, this educational and workforce development model has become a reality. We refer to this vision as the “Living Classroom” (LC). The LC is an interprofessional (IP) approach, whereby a PSE program is delivered within the context of a LTC home, with team members consisting of faculty, students, LTC teams, residents and families, who engage with each other within a culture of interactive learning.

The LC extends the educational and workforce capacity of both PSEs and LTC homes, to meet increasing and changing workforce needs for PSWs. The LC addresses four important public policy objectives that are foundational to all PSEs and LTC homes:

- **Access:** Living Classrooms increase student enrollment in educational programs such as the PSW program, by bringing education closer to prospective students and by locating programs within communities that do not have an existing PSE program;

- **Education Capacity:** Living Classrooms enhance the education capacity within LTC homes and PSEs by demonstrating the teaching and learning value of these settings. The LC promotes continuous learning and teaching among existing LTC teams and PSE faculty, and sharing of best practices and evidenced-based care from student-staff interactions;

- **Workforce Capacity:** Living Classrooms graduate more PSWs with an interest to work in LTC by creating new opportunities for beneficial interaction with residents and families and by fostering a life-learning environment within LTC for students and staff; and

- **Quality:** Living Classrooms graduate individuals with skills that prepare them for careers working with older adults and provide opportunities to develop (and share) new approaches for practice learning in LTC homes. Another goal is to graduate individuals with enhanced motivation to become contributors and change agents for continual improvement in LTC.
This guide provides information and tools for other LTC homes and PSEs who have an interest in collaborating to create shared learning environments for PSW education and development. Our experience demonstrates that the LC environment produces strong graduates interested in and capable of contributing to LTC, and engaged LTC teams and PSE faculty committed to life-long learning and continuous improvement. As well, older adults and their families become part of a team atmosphere, where they enjoy enhanced quality of care and services as a result of the LC shared learning experiences.

Please visit the Living Classroom website (livingclassroom.ca) for additional resources.

The authors and contributors to this guide hope that other PSE and LTC organizations will be inspired to become part of this innovative educational and workforce development strategy. This model extends the capacity of current approaches to PSE and placement relationships by increasing options for collaborative work to meet increasing and changing workforce needs.
Living Classrooms: A New Approach to Workforce Development for Long-Term Care

The Changing Face of Long-Term Care
LTC provides care and services for adults with significant health challenges and/or dementia, who require 24/7 access to nursing care and supervision. Over the past several years, the LTC sector has undergone profound change. In Ontario, adults are entering into LTC more frail and in need of more medical and personal care than ever before. Today, over 90% of residents in LTC have two or more chronic conditions and two-thirds have dementia. In the last five years, there has been a sharp rise in the complexity and frailty of LTC residents. For example, between 2012 and 2017 LTC has seen the number of residents who need extensive help with activities of daily living increase from 77% to 85% (Ontario Long-Term Care Association, 2018).

In Ontario, the median wait time for LTC in 2016/17 was 149 days for residents waiting at home, and 92 days for residents waiting in a hospital (Health Quality Ontario, 2018). These wait times will only increase as adults continue to age and be in further need of LTC services. As the care needs of today’s new residents in LTC increase, so will the workloads of LTC teams, especially PSWs, who are also called Resident Care Attendants or Health Care Aides.

PSWs comprise 72.3% of the nursing and support staff in LTC (Ontario Long-Term Care Association, 2014). PSWs are integral members of the LTC team because they help residents with their activities of daily living, they provide comfort and social engagement, they report changes in resident needs, and they liaise with their friends and families. The number and role of PSWs is growing and changing within this changing face of LTC.

Recruitment and Retention of Personal Support Workers in Long-Term Care
In spite of the critical roles PSWs play in LTC, there are not enough PSWs available and interested in working in LTC. A number of factors contribute to the growing worries about the future workforce and the ability to have sufficient PSWs to meet care needs:

- **Size of workforce in relation to increasing size of older adult population.** The number of working age adults to support older adults is shrinking. In 1971, there were 6.6 working adults per older adult. In 2012, that number dropped to 4.2, and in 2036 it will drop further to 2.2 (Statistics Canada). As a result of this overall workforce shortage, LTC homes will increasingly compete to be seen as the employer of choice within the health care sector to recruit sufficient and competent staff.

- **Career appeal.** LTC is not always perceived as an attractive work setting, nor as a preferred career path for graduates in health care. There are several reasons for this negative stigma, including ageism, stereotyping of LTC homes, limited understanding and exposure to LTC.

“They (PSWs) contribute to the quality of life of individuals who live in facilities and at home by promoting their independence; dignity; social, emotional and physical well-being; mobility; personal appearance; comfort and safety.”

– Ontario Community Support Association, 2009, p. 2
homes (Happell, 1999), low compensation (as compared to other care settings), and few role models and leaders promoting LTC as an attractive career choice (Levett-Jones, Lathlean, McMillan and Higgins, 2007). It is important to have new graduates who fully understand the LTC context as this LTC exposure can greatly improve and change the perception of graduates entering into LTC.

- **Competition for PSWs across health care sectors.** Recent increases in government funding for community care and new hiring practices of PSWs in acute care settings mean increased competition and a shrinking pool of PSWs to work in LTC.

- **Retention of PSWs in the workplace.** In Ontario, it is estimated that there are 90,000 PSWs working in health care. From this number, 57,000 PSWs work in LTC homes, 26,000 work in home care, and 7,000 work in hospitals (Ontario, 2011). Moreover, Ontario trains roughly 7,000 PSW students a year and yet, approximately 9,000 PSWs are lost to attrition every year (Personal Support Network of Ontario, 2009).

It is clear that there are significant challenges in educating, recruiting and retaining PSWs to meet future workforce needs in LTC. Therefore, there is a case for action.

> “Changing the way we educate health care providers is key to achieving system change and to ensuring that health care providers have the necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively in interprofessional teams within the evolving health care system.”
>  
> — Carstairs and Keon, 2009, p. 148

### Challenges for Post-Secondary Education for Personal Support Worker Education

Community colleges, continuing education programs and private career colleges all offer PSW programs. There are three challenges in relation to having sufficient PSWs with the capabilities needed to meet system requirements:

- **PSE enrollment challenges:** Demographic shifts in the school system are resulting in fewer high school graduates. Hence, fewer prospective applicants are enrolling in PSE programs. At the same time, increasing numbers of mature individuals, including those working as PSWs, are returning to school to upgrade. Both situations place new challenges on PSEs to be able to reach out to potential applicants and attract them to careers such as PSW. Without increasing the number of students, it will not be possible to increase the number of PSW graduates.

- **Provincial standards:** Historically, there have been different lengths of programs across the different providers and perceived differences in the quality of the graduates. As of September 2015, all providers of PSW education in Ontario are required to offer programs that meet the new provincial standard for PSW programs.
• **Quality of graduates:** Notwithstanding the fact that all programs as of September 2015 must adhere to provincial standards and their related outcomes, there are still varying approaches to delivery and varying experiences with the quality of placement opportunities with LTC homes.

These concerns support the need for system-wide innovation in educating individuals who will contribute to continual improvement in LTC and the need to build collaborative relationships between LTC homes and PSEs.

**Aligning Personal Support Worker Preparation and Long-Term Care Realities**

Aligning what students learn in PSW preparation programs and how PSWs actually practice in the LTC environment is a challenge. Disconnects can be the result of PSEs not being sufficiently up-to-date on the current approaches and care practices in LTC homes (Pollard, 2008). Sometimes it is because LTC homes do not follow best practices in the way PSWs should be enacting their roles. In an ideal world, the learning environment mirrors the practice environment and vice versa. However, in reality, this is rarely the case in today’s LTC and PSE environment.

Most PSEs make considerable effort to expose PSW students to workplace environments through clinical placements, however, the opportunities available are limited and variable. High-quality and effective clinical experiences require a commitment from the placement site (whether LTC, acute care or community care) to provide mentorship and guided preceptorship. Unfortunately, this commitment does not always occur. As a result, students are not exposed to experienced practice leaders in these settings (Robinson, Abbey, Abbey, Toye and Barnes, 2009).

In today’s reality, LTC homes struggle with recruiting and retaining confident and competent PSWs to meet the various health care needs of residents in LTC. Living Classrooms (LCs), where PSE programs and LTC can co-exist on the same site, offer an innovative solution to these challenges.

“Students that we have hired [from the LC program] have been phenomenal – they get what we are going for, they understand resident-centred care, they understand interprofessional collaboration where other people, not having that kind of experiential education, are a little behind on that.”

– LTC team member

**Opportunities for New Value and Mutual Gain with the Living Classroom**

An alliance between a LTC home and a PSE can address some of the challenges each organization faces in regards to education of students and recruitment and retention of PSWs. From our experience, we demonstrated that such a relationship is both viable and impactful to meeting the workforce challenges in LTC. Our two organizations have united to create and implement a LC. Since 2008, we have learned much about how to integrate education into a LTC home operation.
**Table 1: System Challenges Addressed by the Living Classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Living Classroom Contributions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LTC Workforce Challenges</strong></td>
<td>The LC creates an opportunity for students to be integrated in an experiential learning environment. Concepts taught in the classroom are immediately translated into practical experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not enough PSWs available to hire.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTC is perceived as an unattractive work setting due to ageism, limited exposure, low compensation, low training, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PSW Enrollment Challenges</strong></td>
<td>The LC offers a distributed program delivery and direct links to LTC home to recruit, which may increase the ability to attract students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to increase enrollment in PSW programs to meet workforce needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LTC Education Challenge</strong></td>
<td>Students work alongside PSE faculty, LTC teams, and residents and families to enhance this view of LTC. The LC can develop and share new approaches for preceptors across the system, enhancing education capacity. The LC also provides a source of information regarding new practices in LTC to on-campus education programs and an environment conducive to shared learning between educators and practitioners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of applied and integrated education by experienced role models in LTC homes and lack of faculty with expertise.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Misunderstandings between PSE and LTC</strong></td>
<td>PSE faculty and LTC teams are always in contact with one another because they remain in the same infrastructure. PSE faculty and LTC teams are able to exchange information easier. LTC teams can share current practices with PSE faculty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSE faculty and the LTC team are not consistently informed of one another’s roles, schedules and understandings due to limited interfacing.</td>
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“If we don’t have passionate people in that next generation of professional health care providers, we will fail to grow leaders in LTC and as a result we will lose the voice of LTC. Who is going to be an advocate for residents and LTC in the years to come? Our students! Those students that we mentor and support today – those are the people that will lead LTC in the next decades. Those are the people I count on to build on what we have developed, and they will continue our work, to make sure that older adults receive the best possible quality of care and services.”

– Dr. Veronique Boscart, Canadian Institutes of Health Research/Schlegel Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in Seniors Care and Executive Dean of the School of Health & Life Sciences, Conestoga College
Benefits of the Living Classroom
The LC offers many advantages to a variety of stakeholders in the PSE-LTC alliance. PSE faculty, LTC teams, students, residents and family members can benefit from a well-established LC. Here are some examples of those benefits.

1. **PSE faculty benefit from the LC through:**
   - exposure to the daily practices and events within the LTC home;
   - involvement in all aspects of caregiving and social engagement;
   - participation as an active LTC team member in the provision of evidence-informed care and services; and
   - opportunities to work with the LTC team and refine curriculum and lesson plans for the LC.

2. **LTC teams benefit from the LC through:**
   - involvement and exposure to new clinical practices and approaches to enhance the quality of care and the living experiences of their residents;
   - ability to visit the LC skills lab and practice and update their caregiving skills and knowledge;
   - assistance from students with resident care;
   - broadened social interaction and engagement between students and staff, and residents and families; and
   - opportunities for personal growth and development through mentoring the next generation of PSW students.

“I really enjoy making connections with the residents and team members in the LTC home. It allows me to feel a part of their team, and for them to become part of ours! I get a chance to integrate the mission, vision, values and aspirations of the LTC home into our daily activities. Our [PSE] outcomes are based on a solid curricular foundation with these important threads included. Having the LC in the same building as the LTC home creates an open line of communication and a chance for reciprocal learning.”

– Amy Stiles, Living Classroom Coordinator (2013-2017), Conestoga College, Village of Riverside Glen
3. **Students benefit from the LC through:**
   - access to a PSE program closer to where they live;
   - involvement in a unique learning opportunity based on their immersion in the LTC home;
   - exposure to a variety of mentors and role models to have an increased understanding of the context involved in the care and services for older adults and their families;
   - ability to gain the aptitude and capability to care and provide services specifically to older adults and their families;
   - support to grow as leaders in their career as PSWs; and
   - graduating as PSWs who are workforce ready for LTC and have strong resumes when they apply to LTC employers.

4. **Older adults and families benefit from the LC through:**
   - involvement in student interactions, teaching, and sharing knowledge and wisdom with the students; and
   - opportunities to attend or participate in LC activities and lesson plans to help strengthen student training and learning.

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**Letter from Amy Stiles, Living Classroom Coordinator (2013-2017), Conestoga College, the Village of Riverside Glen**

In learning to care for older adults, LC students are exposed to LTC teams demonstrating compassion, appreciation, patience, and empathy for residents and families. These are core values of any PSW employed in a LTC environment. Some other attributes we aim to support in a LC is students’ comfort in advocating for residents, respecting residents’ rights and family values, providing informed choices to individuals and viewing residents holistically within their environment and communities. A LC offers students an integrated learning and workplace experience in seniors care. The LC also offers residents the opportunity to directly influence and contribute to the development of PSW students who will care for them. The LC is reciprocal in nature – the residents benefit directly from the opportunities, the interaction and care provided to them, and the students, in turn, learn about an entire generation of people, who comprise the majority of society’s population for which they will provide care upon graduation.

“There is a definite increase in confidence of staff working together.”

“Remarkable, many seem more motivated and more dedicated to their work when helping us.”

– Residents of the Village of Riverside Glen
Historical Context
Our LC concept has its roots in the Teaching Nursing Home (TNH) movement. Definitions of TNH vary, but generally agree on the following fundamental concepts (Chilvers and Jones, 1997; Mezey, Mitty and Burger, 2008; Barnett, Abbey and Eyre, 2011):

- involves a collaboration between an academic institution and a LTC home;
- aims to improve quality of education and clinical experiences to prepare a workforce with knowledge, skills and interest in geriatric care;
- fosters research and research integration designed to improve LTC;
- creates synergy between research, education and clinical care; and
- improves resident outcomes.

The idea of bringing students into a LTC home learning environment was first explored in the 1980s, in the United States. Two major groups of TNHs were created, one funded by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and another by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). Both groups of TNHs had similar objectives to establish collaborations between academic institutions and LTC homes, but were focused on different disciplines: the NIA program targeted medicine students, and the RWJF program focused on nursing students. The two programs also differed in their emphasis, with the NIA program focusing on research and the RWJF program focused on workforce development.

The RWJF also funded a comprehensive evaluation of its 11 TNH programs. The results indicated that involvement in a TNH increased nursing students’ perceptions of LTC homes as a more attractive career choice and also increased professional competencies (Barnett et al., 2011). In addition, residents experienced fewer transfers to acute care hospitals, had an improved functional status and reported higher satisfaction (Lipsitz, 1995).

Although these TNHs had some laudable results, the funding to support these initiatives ended and many of the TNHs were subsequently discontinued. Among those that were sustained, several key features were evident, including adaptability to local conditions and ensuring that all parties to the collaboration benefited. For example, the provision of educational opportunities to current staff in the LTC homes, as well as students preparing for their careers, benefited both the home and the academic institution, leading to improved staff retention, student recruitment, quality education, and a more positive image for LTC (Mezey et al., 2008).

There have been several international applications of the TNH movement originally conceived in the United States, including Australia, Norway, the Netherlands and recently, Canada. A comprehensive review of these programs (Barnett et al., 2011) has uncovered a number of lessons and core features for success (see Table 2). At the same time, successful application of the TNHs varies with local contexts, the expertise brought by the collaborating organizations, and the needs of students, organizations, and residents.
Table 2: Core Features and Lessons for Success of the Living Classroom from International Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reciprocal relationship</td>
<td>The literature agrees that there must be a formal structure to the affiliation between a LTC home provider and a PSE. Planning the affiliation is of paramount importance to ensure roles and expectations are clearly defined, and that those involved have a shared and clear vision (Barnett et al., 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective vs universal</td>
<td>Not all LTC homes can or should pursue this model. TNHs should be seen and developed as centres of teaching excellence that serve as models for the LTC sector (Barnett et al., 2011). The literature suggests that larger LTC homes are more likely to be successful in implementing and sustaining a TNH. Larger LTC homes have greater capacity to provide students with a diversity of learning opportunities.</td>
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| Leadership                         | Just as teaching hospitals are the standard against which community hospitals compare themselves, TNHs should be the standard for all LTC homes to compare themselves. An expert panel from the Harford Institute of Geriatric Nursing developed criteria to distinguish LTC homes engaged in TNHs as teaching and learning leaders, having:  
  • a robust Quality Assurance Program;  
  • sufficient preceptors and mentors to train and support students;  
  • staff who are receptive to student participation in care planning and delivery;  
  • interdisciplinary collaboration and teamwork;  
  • excellent compliance record;  
  • accreditation; and  
  • stable leadership (Mezey et al., 2008). |
| Commitment to a collaborative “learning environment” | Both the LTC home and PSE must be committed to providing ongoing learning and training opportunities for staff and for students that integrate learning with care and living in LTC. A mutual commitment to collaborate on research to support continuous quality improvement is also important. |
| Exemplify best practice and innovation | The LTC home must value best practices that are evidence-informed and also demonstrate innovation in establishing new practices. |
| Promote culture change and interdisciplinary education and practice | Quality of life in LTC relies on a culture that provides good care, but not at the expense of living with quality. This culture change requires moving outside of professional and departmental silos and putting the resident at the centre of decision-making. TNHs must promote interdisciplinary education and practice to support the international culture change movement in LTC. |
| Physical infrastructure           | An effective TNH requires adequate and appropriately designed physical spaces on-site in a LTC home to support effective and different learning experiences (i.e., classrooms, laboratory, simulation, etc.). |
| Resource allocation               | The LTC home and PSE must each acquire and allocate resources to support the maintenance of high-quality education in the LC, and high-quality care in LTC. Costs must be shared fairly to support the TNH, including personnel, expertise, space, and operating costs. |
The Living Classroom at Schlegel Villages

The learning from these TNH programs as context-based learning environments has informed and influenced our work at Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages in creating our LC. The LC takes the best of those experiences and tailors it to our environment in Ontario, Canada. A key difference is our focus on workforce development versus research.

In September 2009, Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages opened their first LC, where they welcomed a class of 30 PSW students at the Village of Riverside Glen (Guelph, Ontario). This Village provides a continuum of retirement, assisted living and LTC to approximately 400 older adults. We chose to locate our first LC at the Village of Riverside Glen because it provides access to health care education within the community and draws local students who are unable to travel to other jurisdictions for their schooling.

To expand our LC model, some spaces in the Village were renovated in 2012, to welcome Practical Nursing (PN) students to learn alongside PSW students in the LC. Since its establishment in 2009, hundreds of students have graduated from the LC. Many of these graduates are currently employed at the Village of Riverside Glen.

A second LC opened in 2015 at the Village of University Gates in Waterloo, Ontario, in partnership with the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging. The LC at University Gates delivers both PSW and PN programming. The PN program was transferred from Riverside Glen.

“The LC started at the Village of Riverside Glen, to increase access for students in Guelph. Additional LTC beds were being added in Guelph and all providers had workforce shortages. Schlegel Villages questioned whether there was something that they could do. Together, we (Conestoga College and the Village of Riverside Glen) decided to implement educational programs at the Village of Riverside Glen and increase accessibility to students, and therefore, increase the likelihood of students to graduate and serve the needs of Guelph and surrounding community.”

– Marlene Raasok, Executive Dean (2006-2016), School of Health & Life Sciences and Community Services, Conestoga College
Figure 1: Building Blocks for the Living Classroom

1. Agree on the Living Classroom Definition
2. Determine Operational Viability
3. Identify Win-Win Opportunities and Develop Shared Values
4. Formalize the Collaboration
5. Commit to the Physical Space for the Living Classroom
6. Create Standard Operating Protocols and Formal Agreements
7. Identify and Connect PSE Faculty and LTC Teams
8. Integrate Curriculum and LTC Activities
9. Define Communication and Coordination Mechanisms
10. Promote and Sustain/Expand Value

Living Classroom
Ten Building Blocks for the Living Classroom

Introducing the Building Blocks
Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages have adapted the TNH model and have incorporated many of its core features into our 10 building blocks for a successful LC. Like a house, each building block supports those around it and together form a solid structure (Figure 1). These building blocks recognize the opportunities possible with the LC. They also recognize the need to carefully consider and prepare for the realities of offering PSE education away from the PSE campus with its full scope of student supports. Lastly, these building blocks emphasize the LTC home legislation to support care and services for residents, and the LC needs to meet the requirements of this legislation.

The 10 building blocks are grouped under four stages of implementation:

Explore the Potential for the Living Classroom, with 3 building blocks:
1) Agree on the Living Classroom Definition;  
2) Determine Operational Viability; and  
3) Identify Win-Win Opportunities and Develop Shared Values.

Develop the Foundations for the Living Classroom, with 3 building blocks:  
4) Formalize the Collaboration;  
5) Commit to the Physical Space for the Living Classroom; and  
6) Create Standard Operating Protocols and Formal Agreements.

Implement the Living Classroom, with 3 building blocks:  
7) Identify and Connect PSE Faculty and LTC Teams;  
8) Integrate Curriculum and LTC Activities; and  
9) Define Communication and Coordination Mechanisms.

Promote and Sustain the Living Classroom, with the last building block:  
10) Promote and Sustain/Expand the Value.

“The Living Classroom brings a culture of learning and innovation to the LTC home in which it operates and beyond, to LTC homes where graduates go to work. Where else can you get classroom training, practice in skills labs, and real-life experience alongside residents and staff in a LTC home? This is experience-based learning at its best – not only for students but also for those living and working in LTC.”

– Josie d’Avernas, Executive Director, Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging
Explore the Potential for the Living Classroom

In this section, we discuss three building blocks that are required to begin a LC initiative: 1) Agree on the LC Definition, 2) Determine Operational Viability, and 3) Identify the Win-Win Opportunities and Develop Shared Values. Each of these blocks is discussed in more detail below.

Building Block 1: Agree on the Living Classroom Definition

The first building block focuses on developing a clear LC definition that resonates from the perspective of both the LTC home and the PSE. This is an important first step to promote a full and shared understanding of the idea of the LC. The definition can be refined or adapted later, if needed.

In defining the LC, it is important to realize that the LC is much more than a classroom that is physically located within a LTC home. Our conceptual definition of the LC is one that extends education well beyond the main PSE location, by creating the opportunity for multiple ways to learn and reinforce learning through real-time experiences that also enhance leadership potential among PSW graduates. The LC offers the opportunity for ongoing learning, both for a PSE and a LTC organization. The LC serves as a model for other LTC homes to mobilize a culture of learning and excellence, even when they do not currently have a LC in place.

From development work by the authors and contributors to this guide, our working definition of the LC is as follows:
The LC is an interprofessional approach, whereby a PSE program is delivered within the context of a LTC home, with team members consisting of faculty, students, LTC teams, residents and families, who engage with each other within a culture of learning.

The following features deepen this definition:
- The LC situates students within a learning-centred workplace environment where new knowledge and relationships create a deeper understanding, resulting in a culture that promotes dynamic and responsive learning for students and LTC staff alike.
- The LC offers students an opportunity to become more fully prepared to assume careers in LTC settings with the confidence and mindset of engaging in person-centred care and services for older adults and their families. Modelling is the primary teaching strategy, enabling students to integrate theoretical and practical learning within a supportive context that promotes real-life learning.
- In the LTC home, the LC supports interprofessional practices that align with best practices and with what students are learning. It provides LTC team members with opportunities to teach and mentor students, thus enhancing their own knowledge and skills and sustaining their motivation. It provides immediate benefit to residents and their families as well.
Building Block 2: Determine Operational Viability
Operational viability means the ability to sustain a business and the LC is no different than any other business in this regard. These considerations are the “make or break” elements to help you understand if a collaborative LC is even possible.

The PSE must be willing to deliver a PSW program in a LTC home. This brings with it the requirement to operate in accordance with provincial standards for admission and fees, to deliver in accordance with the approved program standards and curriculum, to support students enrolled in the program in accordance with expectations of the PSE, to staff the program according to PSE practices and policies, and to operate in a fiscally prudent manner.

At the same time, the LTC home must be willing to host delivery of the PSW program. This brings with it the requirement to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements impacting the LTC home, including municipal zoning, infection control, respecting the privacy and dignity of residents, safety, etc. It is also important to understand readiness of staff and the resident/family culture in relation to supporting the proposed development and the expectations for collaborative work.

If you have these two essential elements, you are ready to look more closely at the considerations outlined in Table 3. We recommend that, as a PSE-LTC collaboration, you discuss these considerations through several formal meetings to arrive at a common understanding of each organization’s expectations within the collaboration. Our experience indicates that clarity on the following parameters, including discussions with regulatory authorities to ensure mutual understanding, is critical to LC development – and future operation.

“Our Living Classroom experiences have been possible because of a robust collaboration with Schlegel Villages and we thank them for this long-standing collaboration. We are pleased to share our learning with other PSEs.”

– Marlene Raasok, Executive Dean (2006-2016), School of Health & Life Sciences and Community Services, Conestoga College
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consideration</th>
<th>LTC Home</th>
<th>PSE</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Viability</strong></td>
<td>LTC Homes Act and Regulations • The LTC home is responsible for outlining expectations of students and faculty in relation to LTC regulations, and sets expectations for student engagement.</td>
<td>Provincial Program Standards (MTCU, OCQAS) • Programs delivered in the LC must adhere to the provincial education standards and any accreditation or regulatory requirements from MTCU for the program to ensure that graduates from the LC meet provincial standards.</td>
<td>Public Health Act and Regulations • Infection Control Operating Protocols for the LC need to be aligned with both the LTC home protocols and Public Health expectations related to student and faculty engagement inside and outside the LTC home. • The LC design needs to contemplate implications of closure of care units and/or the LTC home to the public in case of infectious outbreaks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provincial Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>AODA Standards • The LC must be situated in an environment that is physically accessible. • Counselling and other services must be available to students requiring accommodation.</td>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety Legislation • The LTC home is responsible for the environment in which the LC is located; the PSE is responsible for ensuring that the facility and all practices support safety for students and faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provincial Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Health Act and Regulations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market Viability</strong></td>
<td>Clinical Placements • The LTC home provides access to placement opportunities within the LTC home.</td>
<td>Enrollment Capacity • The PSE determines enrollment capacity for the LC and ensures sufficient enrollment for financial viability. • The PSE ensures sufficient placements exist both in the LTC home and the surrounding community.</td>
<td>Research and Evaluation • The LTC home and the PSE should consider participating in research studies and evaluation procedures to support sustainability of the LC to ensure future success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment Capacity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operational Viability and Readiness</strong></td>
<td>Potential Operational Barriers • The LTC home determines human resource readiness and capability for engagement in the proposed collaboration. • The LTC home communicates with residents and family to promote understanding and engagement in the LC.</td>
<td>Potential Operational Barriers • The PSE assesses any operational barriers to delivery off-site from the main campus (including human resource considerations, IT connectivity, etc.). • The PSE assesses ability to meet program outcomes in the proposed location.</td>
<td>Programs in the LC • The LTC home and PSE should jointly discuss which and how many programs should operate in the LC and how many students can enroll in each program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential Operational Barriers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programs in the LC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Resources and Financial Viability</strong></td>
<td>Start-up Considerations • The LTC home provides required space and contributes to ensuring an appropriate environment.</td>
<td>Start-up Considerations • The PSE defines learning space needs for the program including parking and one-time start-up costs to support quality delivery.</td>
<td>Parking • Additional parking spaces may need to be developed in order to accommodate the students and faculty in the LC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Start-up Considerations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Direct Costs • Revenues (from enrollment) should cover direct costs for instructors, program materials, and LC materials. • The PSE pays rent for the LC learning spaces. • The PSE pays for general operating expenses associated with the LC such as electricity, housekeeping, security monitoring, internet, phones, and maintenance services.</td>
<td>Public Transportation • Municipal authorities may be open to additional transit stops or relocation of existing ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Transportation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Transportation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Operational Viability for the Living Classroom
Building Block 3: Identify the Win-Win Opportunities and Develop Shared Values

The LC offers many opportunities for both a LTC home and a PSE. Table 4 presents an overview of the joint opportunities for PSEs and LTC homes embarking on a business relationship. We encourage you to define your own opportunities using the Win-Win items in the chart below to start the discussion.

**Table 4: Win-Win Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Win-Win</th>
<th>LTC Home</th>
<th>PSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Shared Objectives** | • Opportunity to hire PSW graduates with the competencies and knowledge ready for LTC.  
• Opportunity to provide quality of care benefit to residents and their families from new hires trained in a LTC environment.  
• Opportunity for LTC teams to be leaders and provide mentorship to PSW students. | • Opportunity to increase enrollment number of students committed to building a future career in LTC.  
• Ensure students’ capabilities meet workforce needs in LTC.  
• Be current with LTC practices and procedures in response to changing resident and system needs. |
| **Shared Reality**   | • Potential to recruit from more highly trained graduates with LTC skills/knowledge. | • PSW college programs come with basic college tuition and grant funding.  
• LC small class size fits with geographic needs of students and the capacity of LTC homes. |
| **Direct Benefits**  | • Increase support for team learning by observing and supporting student learning, direct access to learning spaces in the LC and opportunities for mentorship. | • Opportunity to expand student enrollment to meet changing workforce needs.  
• Access to environments for clinical learning (both for LC students and other students).  
• Learnings from the LC can be mobilized into PSE curriculum at other campuses. |
With Table 4 as a guide, you can identify your own Win-Win opportunities that can be gained in a PSE-LTC collaboration and assess your compatibility for such a joint venture.

Some of the questions you will want to discuss with potential collaborators include:

1. **Do both organizations feel comfortable with the LC aims of improving quality of education and clinical learning to prepare a competent workforce in LTC? What program do you agree to collaborate on, and why?**

   *Example:* The collaboration between Schlegel Villages and Conestoga College agreed to focus first on PSW education before expanding to education of other groups. Experience offering Practical Nursing (PN) at Riverside Glen also made it clear that PN needs more program support and specialized learning resources.

2. **What will both organizations commit towards the ultimate goal of improving resident outcomes? Discuss specific skills, resources, finances and time commitments. Will both organizations invest time and resources to support research to demonstrate the impact of the LC on resident outcomes?**

   *Example:* In our collaboration, we created a to-do list outlining the major skills, resources, finances and time frames needed and listed who would be responsible for these, and financial resources and in-kind resources committed by each.

3. **How will the LC foster research and research integration designed to improve care?**

   *Example:* In our collaboration between Schlegel Villages and Conestoga College, we both agreed on the value and importance of research, but also to contain the research agenda initially. Our LC research focuses on development and evaluation of PSW education, optimizing the role of PSWs in LTC, and impacts on resident outcomes.

4. **Do both organizations believe that a collaboration model – between a PSE and a LTC home – is the preferred way of working together? Why or why not?**

   *Example:* In our collaboration model, Schlegel Villages ensures that physical space is barrier free and signage meets AODA requirements. Conestoga College ensures that students have all required vaccinations, as well as a vulnerable sector police check, before coming in contact with residents and families in the LTC home.

“I definitely learned more hands on than I did from a book or a teacher.”

“I like the idea. It is nice because it is closer for me and it is in an actual retirement facility to show us what it is really like.”

– Students in the Living Classroom
Mission Statement
As you can see from the discussion questions above, shared values help define the LC, what the LC can achieve, and how to make it successful. If desired, these shared values can be put forward in a formally stated mission statement.

A mission is the motivator and the driver to any business organization. It is something to work for and toward. If there is no mission, then there is nothing that binds the collaboration. There is no director, no destination, nothing to work toward. When a mission is created, it should be used as the basis for all decision-making in the collaboration (Rinehart, Tammy, Laszlo, Anna, and Briscoe, 2001).

Sample Mission Statement for a Living Classroom

“The LC aims to develop a competent and caring workforce for LTC, by bringing the organizational values and expertise of Schlegel Villages and Conestoga College together, and by locating learning on-site in a LTC home, as well as integrating learning and practice.”

During our discussion on the LC collaboration, we developed three goals for the LC that built on the missions of the respective organizations to guide development and implementation. A banner hangs in the LC as a reminder of these goals and the mission statements of the collaborating organizations.

Living Classroom Banner
“All the students are excellent. They get a chance to express themselves and the staff are willing to listen to what each student says and I enjoy the activities that the students set up for us [residents], like bowling, crossword puzzles, bingo, trivia, and specialty dinners.”

– Richard Potwarka, resident of the Village at University Gates

“I think it is a tremendous and positive environment.”

– Charlene Potwarka, wife of Richard Potwarka
Develop the Foundations for the Living Classroom

A LC requires rigorous planning and agreement discussions, followed by documented and signed agreements. Although these agreements take a considerable amount of time and careful planning, it is important for any formal collaboration wishing to be successful. Therefore, we recommend that you have an operational viability plan, a collaboration plan, the LC physical design, SOPs, and formal agreements in place before the implementation phase begins.

This section introduces three foundational building blocks for the LC: 4) Formalize the Collaboration, 5) Commit to the Physical Space of the LC, and 6) Create Standard Operating Protocols and Formal Agreements.

Building Block 4: Formalize the Collaboration

Once both organizations have confirmed that the LC is viable and agree on shared values and a mission statement, then it is time to start thinking of the business relationship for the LC: There are many types of business relationships, and each has its pros and cons. Table 5 distinguishes these different forms of business relationships (adapted from Mattessich, 2001).

Table 5: Business Relationships for the Living Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Components in Business Organization</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Coordination</th>
<th>Collaboration ★</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision and Relationships</td>
<td>• Independent goals</td>
<td>• Interdependent goals</td>
<td>• Organizations work together on a shared mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No time limit</td>
<td>• Often focused on one project at a time, short-term goals</td>
<td>• One or more projects worked on for long-term results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No clear mission or planning effort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure, Responsibilities, and Communication</td>
<td>• Each organization functions individually</td>
<td>• Structured communication flows</td>
<td>• Several communication channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information is given only when necessary</td>
<td>• Formalized project-based information sharing</td>
<td>• Tacit information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority and Accountability</td>
<td>• Power remains with each organization</td>
<td>• Authority and accountability rests with each organization, but some coordination and leadership is involved</td>
<td>• Equal risk is shared by all organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and Rewards</td>
<td>• Resources and rewards remain with each organization</td>
<td>• Rewards are mutually acknowledged between organizations</td>
<td>• Resources and rewards are shared mutually between organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From our experience, we found that a business relationship focused on collaboration was optimal for our LC.

“A collaboration is two or more different partners (e.g., individuals, organizations, networks) coming together from various sectors, groups and/or neighbourhoods to work toward common goals. Collaborations are about people and organization building, nurturing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships in order to achieve shared goals that will benefit all parties” (Graham and Mollenhauer, 2011).

There are several reasons why a collaboration is an ideal structure for the LC:

First, a collaboration requires sharing of resources. In relation to the LC, both a PSE and a LTC home have something unique to offer the LC, making the collaboration greater than the sum of its parts. For example, a PSE brings experienced faculty, its curriculum, and students seeking an education in caring for older adults. A LTC home brings a team of health care professionals, mentors, residents and families, a LTC environment, and real-time practices in care and service delivery for older adults. In order for the LC to become the best that it can be, a LTC home and a PSE must be open to sharing their resources and expertise.

Second, a collaboration requires a high level of mutual trust between a PSE and a LTC home. A PSE and a LTC home who develop a trusting relationship demonstrate the following characteristics (Ontario Association of Residents’ Councils, 2012):

- looking forward to opportunities to work as a team;
- appreciating and tapping into one another’s skills and experiences;
- knowing one’s limitations and strengths and are not afraid to ask for help or support;
- offering and accepting apologies without hesitation;
- accepting questions and input about one’s areas of responsibility;
- focusing time and energy on important issues, not politics;
- being inclusive of others;
- giving others the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a conclusion; and
- taking risks in offering feedback and assistance.

Third, a collaboration requires strong communication channels to be established, not only between the collaborating organizations, but also between its internal and external stakeholders. A collaboration between a PSE and a LTC home can leverage its existing circle of stakeholders who are engaged in supporting students’ knowledge, skills and workforce competencies. Internal stakeholders include the LTC team, residents and family members, all benefiting directly from the LC by contributing to students’ learning while refining their own practices and participating in meaningful activities. Other internal stakeholders include students and faculty from the PSE, who benefit from access to supportive environments that support career-ready learning.

Meanwhile, external stakeholders include other LTC homes, who gain from the LC by having access to more graduates who are interested and available to join the LTC workforce. Community organizations are also considered external stakeholders as they benefit from the LC by having access to the learning environments, simulation labs, classrooms, and resources, when not in use for the LC, which can strengthen community building and capacity for a variety of groups.
Fourth, as with each endeavour and new collaboration, risk, power and reward are equally shared. This facilitates a healthy and long-term relationship between both organizations. Planning, implementing, promoting and evaluating the LC is a long-term commitment requiring a LTC home and a PSE to remain committed to fulfilling the LC vision and mission, along with ongoing commitments of resources (i.e., financial, personnel, expertise, and space).

To find out more about why Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages used this model, see the story box below.

**Our Story of Collaboration**

Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages both had something to offer that the other party admired and desired. The college works with faculty that have extensive expertise in gerontological teaching and curriculum development. Schlegel Villages has a strong reputation as a leading LTC home provider with over 3,500 residents and over 3,800 team members. At Schlegel Villages, recruiting excellent team members is a priority, with an aim to be known as an employer of choice for PSWs and PNs.

Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages have had a relationship since 2006 focused on mutual gain training and practice development. Our collaboration to create LCs made sense since we shared the same vision to solve the current challenges that PSEs and LTC homes face. The photos below show the many players involved in creating and sustaining this collaborative relationship.

**Shared leadership through relationships with a long-term view**

These individuals are the leaders from Conestoga, Schlegel Villages and the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging who are central to ensuring the program, financial and legal underpinnings are in place. Three of these individuals (one from each organization) have been working together for nine years. Shared values related to innovation and mutual gain have sustained the LC through both highs and lows.

**Shared values and objectives with a commitment to teamwork**

This is the LC team at the Village of Riverside Glen. Continuity of PSE and LTC home involvement, administrative processes (streamlined over five years), plus on-site leadership to engage new members in the team create energy and positive momentum and ease of working relationships.

**Building on Success**

This is the new team at the Schlegel Centre of Excellence for Innovation in Aging in Waterloo, Ontario. This team and the LC have developed quickly since all collaborators have the benefit of learning from Riverside Glen.
Building Block 5: Commit to the Physical Space of the Living Classroom

After you have jointly developed an operational viability plan (see building block 2) and the basis for a collaborative business relationship, it is time to finalize the physical environment of the LC. We identified the following space considerations for the LC (Table 6).

Table 6: Physical Facility Planning of the Living Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Learning Spaces</th>
<th>Student Integration with LTC Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A “Home for Students”</td>
<td>Student lounge, study and gathering spaces.</td>
<td>It is sometimes difficult to integrate the student informal space within the existing resident and staff space. Existing spaces in a LTC home are usually insufficient for students as well as residents and families. Consider creating separate spaces to accommodate students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement of Students with LTC Residents and Staff</td>
<td>Residents, family and staff should be invited to participate in teaching and mentoring in the LC spaces.</td>
<td>Operating protocols support student engagement with residents, families and staff in the LTC home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Learning</td>
<td>Classroom space is essential, and may be shared with the LTC home.</td>
<td>Theoretical learning can also happen or be reinforced in the practice environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Learning</td>
<td>Skills labs help students prepare for interactions in care delivery with residents.</td>
<td>LTC teams engage students in specific care practices (e.g., conversations, lifting and transferring, bathing, hand hygiene, assisting with the dining experience) within resident areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student and Faculty Support Space and Resources</td>
<td>Private faculty work space is needed for faculty and student counselling and storage of confidential student records. Assign computer and media learning support space as appropriate to the program. Ensure that Internet and phone lines are available. A secure room is required to ensure safety of LC equipment and medical supplies.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Learning Spaces</td>
<td>Student Integration with LTC Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking and Public Transportation</td>
<td>Parking for students and faculty. Access to nearby public transportation.</td>
<td>Clarity of parking management. Confirm bus stop locations, request new transit stop if necessary, or re-location of existing transit stop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Entry and Signage for Students and Faculty</td>
<td>Students must be able to enter/exit the LC even when the LTC home is closed due to outbreak or other reasons. This can be achieved by locating the LC in a building adjacent to the LTC home or in an area that can be separated from the LTC home. Develop policies for LC hours of operation within the LTC home. Provide signage and placement of the LC to provide a professional image and presence.</td>
<td>The presence of the LC provides the opportunity for an education hub for non-LC students completing a placement in the LTC home. This is an opportunity for interprofessional engagement with a broader range of students, PSE staff and LTC home teams. Policies need to be developed for students who wish to volunteer in the LTC home outside of LC hours of operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Environment</td>
<td>Flooring surfaces should be designed for heavy traffic and be non-glare and non-slip. Windows for natural lighting are desired but not essential. Window coverings must be able to block out light to promote visibility of presentations, etc. Avoid proximity to noisy areas including kitchen, laundry or ventilation systems. Lights should be dimmable for various teaching/learning formats.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are many items that go into making the LC an inviting and interprofessional working environment. Table 7 provides examples of the space allocations for the LC at the Village of Riverside Glen. These spaces were designed to accommodate 48 PSW students at one time (with two overlapping intakes) and two faculty. Space needs are proportional to student numbers and type of program.

**Table 7: Example of the Space Allocations for the Living Classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village of Riverside Glen LC</th>
<th>Square Feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty office</td>
<td>635 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge area</td>
<td>880 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer lab</td>
<td>175 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical lab</td>
<td>1435 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom 1</td>
<td>810 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom 2</td>
<td>740 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4675 sq. ft.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 provides an example of the furniture and equipment needed for the LC. Please note that costs will vary depending on the number of students enrolled and the type of program. Also, Table 8 does not include electricity, rent payments, housekeeping and maintenance services, medical supplies, and IT or WIFI systems. At the Village of Riverside Glen LC, the cost of the items in Table 8 totalled approximately $120,000 to $150,000.

**Table 8: Example of Furnishings and Equipment for the Living Classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty office</strong></td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Filing cabinet</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bulletin board</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desktop computers and software</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Printer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lounge area</strong></td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student couches</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laser printer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bulletin board</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fridge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Microwave</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coffee machine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book case</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recycling bin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kettle</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two-person table</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Computer lab</strong></td>
<td>Desktop computers with software</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desks</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clinical lab</strong></td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospital beds</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospital beside chair</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bedside table</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over-bed table</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Privacy curtains and track</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human mannequin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical cart/workstation on wheels</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linens for beds</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom 1</strong></td>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor chair</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor workstation/podium</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desktop computer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four-person desks</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV screen</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV projector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom 2</strong></td>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor chair</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor workstation/podium</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four-person desks</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV screen</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV projector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men's and women’s washrooms</strong></td>
<td>Mirrors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hand dryers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paper towel dispensers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waste paper baskets</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soap dispenser</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Hand sanitizer dispensers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Room and directional signage</td>
<td>As required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building Block 6: Create Standard Operating Protocols and Formal Agreements

**Standard Operating Protocols (SOPs)**

SOPs are written documents that describe the regularly recurring operations that are relevant to the LC. Typically, SOPs provide step-by-step instructions on how to perform a routine or regular activity, which maximizes the safety and operational efficiency and predictability of the LC.

The LC presence in a LTC home requires several SOPs to protect the day-to-day activities of the LTC team and residents, in accordance with the LTC home and PSE operating regulations.

These protocols address areas beyond academic policies of the college and LTC policies of the LTC home. Table 9 provides a few examples that reflect our experience in defining practices that are important for operation of the LC.

*Contact us if you are interested in learning more about these protocols and adapting them to your needs.*

Table 9: Standard Operating Protocols for the Conestoga College-Schlegel Villages Living Classroom

1) Protocols for terminology and signage for communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protocol for terminology of internal and external signs for the LC – to clarify where LC signs are allowed to go on the LTC home property.</td>
<td>External signage has been placed in the parking lot to indicate to students where to park and how to find the LC entrance of the LTC home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol for terminology of correspondence with students – to identify college programs in the LC.</td>
<td>Internal signage has been placed on doorways and hallways to provide directions to the LC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol for terminology on college’s website – to manage the college’s programs and to ensure that the website aligns with college’s administrative/financial systems, which will create clarity for students applying to the programs.</td>
<td>Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages use the same terminology and descriptions of the LC, its location and how to get there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2) Protocols for safety considerations for the Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for privacy</strong> – to make sure that personal information about</td>
<td>All persons involved in the LC abide by Schlegel Villages “Privacy of Personal and Health Care Information” policy. All sign a Confidentiality Agreement and the LC Coordinator collects these forms and connects with the Privacy Officer at the Village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>residents, LTC team members, health care practitioners, students,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteers and contract workers is protected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for practicum health and safety requirements by the students</strong> – to enforce health and safety requirements for all students attending the LC and LTC home areas. This ensures the health and safety of residents and the LTC team. Students participating in the LC must meet all practicum-related health requirements within the first month of the program, in order to be able to participate in learning activities in the LTC home.</td>
<td>Conestoga College’s Practicum Services is responsible for overseeing: • packages to be sent out to all new and returning students outlining health and safety requirements; • collecting and recording all health and safety documents; and • following up with students who do not submit appropriate documentation. The LC Coordinator will ensure all health and safety requirements are met and connect with the General Manager of the Village to provide updates on health and safety requirements of the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for infection prevention control</strong> – so all are aware of the</td>
<td>The Office of Practicum Services is responsible to update the Infection Prevention Control documents annually and connect with the LC Coordinator and the General Manager of the Village to communicate any updates regarding this protocol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guidelines to follow if an outbreak were to occur in the LTC home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This protocol takes into consideration additional precautions for the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTC home of students attending other health care environments, where</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there may be an outbreak, before returning to the LC environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for health and safety requirements by the faculty</strong> – to</td>
<td>All Conestoga College faculty in the LC are required to complete all health and safety requirements. The College’s Chair of Nursing Program is accountable to ensure faculty’s compliance and monitor the reporting of these requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enforce health and safety requirements for all staff attending the LC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and LTC home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3) Protocols for safety and security of the LC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for a smoke-free property</strong> – to inform students, LTC teams, residents, families and visitors of the smoking policy and to enforce the policy.</td>
<td>Smoking is not permitted on the property of the Village. Individuals who wish to smoke must use the designated areas only, where smoking receptacles are located (i.e., off property).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for occupational health and safety</strong> – to eliminate and prevent occupational illness and injury in the areas of the LC and the LTC home.</td>
<td>Conestoga College employees must take “Conestoga Worker Health and Safety Awareness Training” online and report completion to the Safety Officer. Students are required to complete WHMIS training, WSIB training and AODA training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for fire safety</strong> – includes a fire plan, which is followed by all persons in the LC in the event of a fire.</td>
<td>Fire safety signs are posted throughout the LC. The fire plan is taught to students and college faculty by the Village team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for key management</strong> – to describe how the keys to the LC will be monitored and who will have access to them.</td>
<td>The LC Coordinator holds two sets of keys to the LC at the Village. One set is for the classrooms and labs and the second set is to open the faculty office. A sign-in and out sheet is available for anyone borrowing the keys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for emergency procedures</strong> – to ensure that all LTC team members, faculty and students understand the emergency procedures of the LTC home.</td>
<td>The Village uses a colour code system to represent fire, evacuation, bomb threat, missing person, etc. These codes are presented in a handbook that is given to all persons involved in the LC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for entrance door access to LC</strong> – to ensure that the entrance door to the LC is locked during closing hours and is unlocked during opening hours. It is also a protocol used in case of an infectious outbreak in the LTC home.</td>
<td>Students and faculty enter the LC through the LC entrance of the Village. Students are told when the entrance door is locked and unlocked at their orientation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4) Protocols for building operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for scheduling spaces in the LC</strong> – is used for anyone wishing to reserve a learning space within the LC or to use LC equipment.</td>
<td>When scheduling spaces in the LC, Conestoga College and the Village consider the number of people taking part in the activity, noise level, hours of operation, parking in designated areas, etc. The LC Coordinator contacts the Executive Dean to receive approval to schedule space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for maintenance and maintenance systems</strong> – to ensure that the operation and maintenance of the physical assets of the LC are based on the relationship agreed upon between the College and the LTC home.</td>
<td>Conestoga College created a shortcut application to request a maintenance issue. A confirmation email is sent back once received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for housekeeping</strong> - to maintain the cleanliness and attractiveness of all interior areas of the LC, by utilizing housekeeping services agreed upon between the college and the LTC home.</td>
<td>Through the Village, environmental services provide housekeeping services in the LC. They empty garbage and recycling bins, sweep classroom areas, wipe down surface areas, wash sheets and towels, and restock consumable items.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) Protocols for LC support services and procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for use of skill labs</strong> – to ensure that mannequins and lab equipment are protected and used correctly.</td>
<td>The LC Coordinator locks all doors to skill labs at the end of each day to avoid student/resident/family/team access during after hours. A supervisor must be present when using any of the skill labs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for supply management</strong> – to maintain consistency and integrity of the procurement process, to communicate direction and accountabilities to all personnel involved in the supply management function.</td>
<td>The Practice Application Specialist requests LC supplies for the programs and sends these orders to the college’s dispensary to process the orders via an inventory system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for furniture and equipment management</strong> – to monitor the integrity of the furniture and equipment in the LC, as well as those involved in the repair/replacement of LC items, should such a need arise. It also pertains to the members of the staff involved in initiating, processing, and receiving the necessary documentation and furniture and equipment at the LC site, when required.</td>
<td>If Conestoga College or the Village comes across a piece of furniture or equipment that is damaged, the General Manager, Dispensary, and Conestoga’s Satellite Facilities determine whether the repair can be completed by the college or the Village, through following the normal Capital Expenditure Procurement process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for parking</strong> – to set up standards for parking on the LTC home’s property.</td>
<td>Students attending the LC receive notification of parking services by the LC Coordinator at the beginning of their program. A valid permit must be purchased and displayed (in order to access parking for the LC). Parking is enforced by Conestoga College’s Parking and Security Services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6) Protocols for student, faculty and Village team member engagement and expectations throughout the LC initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for orientation</strong> – to ensure students, faculty and Village team members are aware of the LC initiative and what their roles are.</td>
<td>The LC Coordinator connects with the General Manager of the Village and Conestoga’s Student Life Department to book a date, time, and place for student orientation. The LC receives appropriate communication and planning materials from the college to run the orientation (i.e., program handbooks, uniforms, parking passes, student IDs, orientation letter, etc.). The student orientation is provided by the LC Coordinator and faculty, the Village team, residents and the Village General Manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for student celebrations and events</strong> – to ensure that celebrations and events are held in a safe environment that does not disrupt the academic process or resident day-to-day activities.</td>
<td>If any person wishes to book an event in conjunction with Conestoga College programs at the Village then the LC Coordinator and the Village General Manager are involved in the discussion. Once the LC Coordinator receives approval from the Executive Dean or the Chair of Nursing, the LC Coordinator books the space using the college’s scheduling system, as required and the event follows Conestoga College’s guidelines for event planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protocol for the program handbook</strong> – to help students succeed academically by providing information on academic standards, guidelines and processes in the PSW Program.</td>
<td>The LC Coordinator introduces the program handbook to students during orientation. Students are responsible for reading, understanding and following the information in the handbook or asking for clarification. The program handbook is reviewed and updated annually by the Chair of Nursing, LC Coordinator, PAS, and the General Manager of the Village.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7) Protocols for student support procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Protocol for off-site use of accessibility services** – to provide a safe and accessible environment for students with disabilities. | Conestoga College’s Protocol for Accessibility Services regarding Test Writing requires that:  
- there is adequate time provided for student travel to the college campus hosting a written test;  
- there is adequate time provided so that students returning from test writing with Accessibility Services can return to the LC; and  
- faculty returns tests to the student in a sealed envelope or the faculty will pick up the completed test at the main college campus. |
| **Protocol for off-site use of counselling services** – pertains to the availability of counselling services for any full-time or part-time student who is taking a college program within the LC. | The LC Coordinator will book a time with Counselling Services during orientation to provide an introduction to students. Students wishing to book an appointment can access the Counselling Services page on Conestoga’s website. |
| **Protocol for lockers** – to provide sufficient locker storage space for students at the LC. | The LC Coordinator creates a list of locker numbers and assigns these to new students at the start of the LC program. Students are responsible for providing a lock for the assigned locker. A lock found on an unassigned locker will be removed. Lockers are cleaned by housekeeping during the changing seasons. Any issues with lockers is reported to maintenance. |

**Formal Agreements**

Although there are many SOPs that have to be considered between both organizations when a LC is developed, only two formal agreements are recommended. These formal agreements protect the interests of the PSE and the LTC home throughout the LC initiative:

1) The **Use of Space Agreement** (a unique requirement for the LC) sets out expectations related to use of space at the LTC home and by the PSE. It also defines financial, safety, insurance, and liability considerations for both parties. Table 10 outlines the elements of this agreement.

2) The **Clinical Affiliation Agreement** (typical of all PSE-LTC home agreements when the PSE has students in the LTC home) identifies expectations of both parties related to unpaid education placements and to manage considerations regarding legal liability. Table 11 outlines the elements of this agreement.
These two agreements:
• provide each party with enforceable rights;
• ensure key administrative expectations related to the LC are understood by all parties involved;
• set out financial obligations of each party;
• show that each party is committed to the entire project; and
• determine how to terminate or add more parties.

Table 10: Typical Elements in a Use of Space Agreement for the Living Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use and Occupancy</td>
<td>This section lays out how the PSE or the LTC home will use the LC space to deliver programs and other related services. It outlines the maximum amount of people allowed to use the LC space at any given time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>This section details the financial contributions of each collaborator or any other financial arrangements. A budget sheet can be included in the agreement to indicate financial responsibility for the different costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment</td>
<td>This section details the amount of funding or money, if any, that one party will pay or reimburse the other and the timing of the payment. The payment schedule includes a timeline of specific deliverables that will trigger payment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
<td>This section includes the usual day-to-day cleaning, garbage, recycling, and scheduling, window cleaning and day-to-day minor repairs such as replacing light bulbs and clearing blocked plumbing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>This section includes the specific areas on the premises where students, faculty, and the Village team can park. Collaborators also determine the number of parking spaces needed, and if parking payments are required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety</td>
<td>This section includes the responsibilities of the PSE and LTC home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indemnification</td>
<td>This section holds other parties in the collaboration harmless from and against any and all liability, loss, expense or claims for injury or damages in the LC or other areas of the building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance and Liability</td>
<td>This section states that neither collaborator is, in law, responsible for any death or injury arising from or out of any occurrence in, upon, at or relating to the LC, or any damages that occurs in the LC. This section outlines that all items involved in the LC shall be kept and stored on the premises. The amount of liability insurance should be mentioned in this section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution</td>
<td>This section outlines how collaborators will terminate the collaboration arrangement or an organization’s involvement in the collaboration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11: Typical Elements in a Clinical Affiliation Agreement for the Living Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Agreement</td>
<td>To promote a planned and supervised program of clinical experience for students within the setting of a LTC home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Period and Renewal of Agreement</td>
<td>Commencement and termination date of affiliation, including reference to early termination terms is specified in the agreement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Responsibilities of the LTC Home | Responsible for supervision/provision and control over care and treatment of residents.  
Determine maximum number of students the LTC home can accommodate at any given time.  
Participate in orientation.  
Contribute to students’ practical evaluation, and co-operate with PSE faculty and student for curricular assignments.  
Ensure students do not replace scheduled LTC team members and that student are not left unsupervised when providing resident care.  
Provide conference rooms, access to library facilities, areas for nutritional breaks, suitable change areas, provide special uniforms or protective clothing, provide supplies and services as required, and make emergency health care available to faculty and students.  
The right to suspend a student from the LTC due to professional misconduct. |
| Responsibilities of the PSE | Responsible for informing the LTC home of the number of students attending the LC.  
Share learning objectives for the practical learning experience in the LTC home.  
Provide names of faculty who will be supervising students participating in resident care.  
Adhere to the policies and procedures of the LTC home. |
| Indemnification              | Both the LTC home and the PSE agree to save both organizations harmless from all liabilities.                                                                                                               |
| Insurance                   | Both the LTC home and the PSE agree to maintain comprehensive general liability insurance.                                                                                                             |
Implement the Living Classroom

The previous section discussed three foundational building blocks for the LC. Having these plans and operational procedures in place provides you with the capacity for successful implementation. In this chapter, we introduce the next three building blocks, which include 7) Identify and Connect PSE Faculty and LTC Teams, 8) Integrate Curriculum and LTC Activities, and 9) Define Communication and Coordination Mechanisms. These three blocks all relate to the actual implementation now that the groundwork is in place.

Implementing the LC is a process that is both demanding and rewarding. It is not always a linear path. Therefore, be prepared to be engaged in a cyclical implementation process, whereby you may find yourself moving forward on some activities while needing to backtrack on others (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Cyclical Living Classroom Implementation Process

“\textit{I am proud to be part of the LC in a different way. I am a Registered Practical Nurse at the Village of Riverside Glen, working within the role of team lead and caregiver, but I am also a Practice Application Specialist with the Conestoga College LC. Within this role I have the opportunity to share my experience, knowledge, confidence and passion with PSW students – members of the health care team, who provide frontline care.}”

\textit{– Timothy Hutten, PN, the Village of Riverside Glen}
Building Block 7: Identify and Connect Post-Secondary Education Faculty and Long-Term Care Teams

People are the greatest asset in LCs, as in many other businesses and collaborations. The LC creates an environment for shared learning between PSE faculty and the LTC team and leads to enhanced personal and professional growth for both groups. This positivity influences the faculty and LTC team’s quality of teaching and mentoring of students. PSE and the LTC team are encouraged to engage with one another, discuss best care practices, and seek out innovative teaching strategies for curriculum enhancement (see building block 8).

In the LC, the PSE academic team delivers the program: PSE faculty provide theoretical learning and lead curriculum development and evaluation of knowledge and skills in the labs and placement experiences, and Practice Application Specialists support students to demonstrate and improve their application of knowledge and skills in the experiential settings. LTC team members may provide specialized demonstrations of key content in the LC space as well as in the LTC home. Most importantly, students have an opportunity to see team members in action where they are role models and mentors to students. Not to be forgotten is the valued role that residents and families have in student learning and mentoring. Careful planning and consideration should go into identifying and connecting the LC faculty and LTC team.

Building the LC Team

We have found four human resource components to be important for a high-functioning LC running a PSW program. These include:

1. A full-time PSE LC Coordinator with a team of part-time instructors and support staff, who have expertise in seniors care and come with a commitment to collaborate with the LTC team members.

The first LC Coordinator at the Village of Riverside Glen explains why a combination of full-time and part-time faculty is beneficial in the LC:

“Having a full-time PSE faculty on-site ensures that there is always a contact person. It provides staff, residents and family with a consistent LC person. The residents, Village team and family know who I am, and I am able to build relationships with them. As a LC Coordinator, I know the policies and procedures well enough to ensure everyone’s safety and provide information. I also know the residents well enough so they feel comfortable with my students and are aware of the LC activities. I also know which LTC team member to approach if there is an issue.

On the other hand, having part-time PSE faculty and support staff is also beneficial for the LC because it gives students a new person to learn from. Part-time PSE faculty bring a new perspective to the LC because they come from different health care backgrounds, providing students useful and rich information, which can serve them well when working in the Village. Lastly, faculty’s different teaching abilities are great for students who may have different learning styles. All of this combined provides a well-rounded learning and mentoring experience for the students.”

– Amy Stiles, Living Classroom Coordinator (2013-2017), Conestoga College, Village of Riverside Glen
2. A management person in the LTC home (who may or may not be the General Manager but needs to have sufficient responsibility to support LC functions) has the responsibility to liaise with the LC Coordinator to plan for student involvement in the LTC home and to engage LTC home team members in the activities of the LC. The LTC team facilitates transitions of knowledge and learning from the LC setting and into the LTC home setting. They assist students with problem solving, clinical skill development, and handling the social and emotional aspects of providing care and services in a LTC setting. LTC team members help students feel welcome and confident in this practice setting.

3. Leadership for day-to-day operations of both the PSE and LTC home:
   • The Chair of Nursing is academically responsible for the operation of the LC and has regular contact with the LC staff, as well as the students to ensure they are given support for and alignment with academic standards. The Chair relies on the on-site Program Coordinator to represent the college on a daily basis to ensure consistency of academic delivery and linkages between students and student supports as required by the college.
   • The General Manager for the LTC home is accountable for LTC home support for the LC and is a key individual in creating a collaborative environment for LC operations and resolving on-site concerns in an effective and expeditious manner.

4. Organizational leadership
   It is essential that the LC has organizational support and involvement of senior leaders from both the PSE and LTC home. These leaders confirm the viability and feasibility, and shape the Win-Win approach for the collaboration.

Characteristics of a Successful Team
   Whether hiring a LTC team member or a PSE faculty, it is important to identify the characteristics that best match the LCs values and goals. Below are a few examples of these characteristics:

   • Experience working in LTC home(s) and with older adults and their families
   • Experience working with older adults diagnosed with dementia or related impairments
   • Experience teaching students with different learning capabilities
   • Experience with curriculum development and development of hands-on activities
   • Strong communication skills
   • Good technology skills
   • Being committed to promote quality of life and well-being for older adults
   • Believing in the goals and initiatives of the LC
   • Ability to inspire students about caring for older adults
   • Strong people engagement skills
   • Ability to provide constructive feedback to student learning
   • Excellent organizational skills
   • Desire to mentor or pursue a mentoring experience
   • A champion who will motivate others to optimize course objectives, content, and teaching strategies
   • Ability to work in a dynamic interprofessional team
Orientation
When a LC team has been chosen, it is important to invite all team members to a team and faculty orientation. Orientations help the LC thrive by providing PSE faculty and the LTC team an opportunity to become acquainted, build working relationships, and support the understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities within the LC. A few of these key roles and responsibilities are found in the list below.

Roles and Responsibilities
Role of Living Classroom Coordinator:
• Deliver the program in accordance with PSE policies, PSE procedures, and LC and LTC home SOPs
• Responsible for unlocking and locking entrance of LC
• Create connections and provide opportunities to learn and grow in the LC
• Schedule monthly meetings with LTC home General Manager to discuss infection control policies, student vaccinations and codes of conduct, etc.
• Assign students to lockers
• Organize student and staff orientation
• Connect with the CSI Services Coordinator to discuss and arrange activities applicable for students attending LC programs
• Responsible for double-checking room bookings with Executive Dean or Chair of Nursing
• Maintain copy of keys to the LC
• Ensure that all health and safety requirements are met and connecting with the General Manager of the Village
• Report maintenance or housekeeping issues.

Role of PSE faculty and staff in the LC:
• Deliver the program in accordance with PSE policies, PSE procedures, and LC and LTC home SOPs
• Be a role model for professionalism
• Create connections and provide opportunities for all LC players to learn and grow
• Develop and document opportunities to integrate learning activities in the curriculum to enhance student learning (see building block 8)
• Day-to-day coordination with the LTC home activities and schedules (see building block 9)
• Engage with residents and families through resident and family council and through LTC home communication channels in collaboration with LTC team (see building block 9)
• Market the program and maintain community connections (see building block 10)
• Identify other PSE programs that may have placements in the same LTC home and develop relationships with these programs to optimize interprofessional learning.

Role of PSE Chair in the LC:
• Approve SOPs in collaboration with LTC home administration
• Oversee program delivery (i.e., curriculum, course outlines and assignments) through regular communication with the LC team and students as required
• Annual enrollment and financial management of LC
• Coordinate annual program reflections with LC Coordinator and the main campus PSW team.
Role of LTC team:
- Collaborate with PSE faculty to develop SOPs to ensure clarity of student integration with LTC home operations
- Role model professionalism in providing care and services to residents and family, as well as in collaborating with fellow team members
- Collaborate with PSE team to develop unique learning opportunities for students to learn, reflect, and grow
- Support students as they become involved in the life of the LTC home
- Ensure LC faculty and students know how to respond in case of a fire or emergency, an infectious outbreak, etc.
- Engage in regular communication and coordination activities with the LC faculty team
- Ensure communication mechanisms are in place with residents and families so they stay informed of the LC activities and students (see building block 9).

Role of LTC home General Manager:
- Foster a learning environment in the LTC home, as a key foundation for mutual gain with the LC
- Encourage and support LTC team members during student visits and activities in the LTC home
- Engage with residents and families to ensure they understand the LC and help identify opportunities for engagement
- Meet monthly with the LC Coordinator to coordinate student events and activities within the LTC home
- Verify with the LC Coordinator that all pre-practicum health requirements are met by the students
- Inform LTC team members of the opportunities available in the LC (i.e., attend a skills lab, renewing CPR certification, dementia workshops, etc.)
- Address all inquiries regarding housekeeping and maintenance in the LC.

“As a Chair, success with a LC has three aspects: increasing the opportunity for students who might not have been able to come to the main campus to gain this education; ensuring alignment of program delivery with overall standards of the college program and services; and facilitating sharing of experiences from the LC with the main PSW program and vice versa.”

– Lynn Voelzing, Chair (2011-2016), Nursing, School of Health & Life Sciences and Community Services
Building Block 8: Integrate Curriculum and Long-Term Care Activities

A curriculum is the heart of any given educational program. A curriculum is a series of planned instruction that is coordinated and articulated in a manner that is designed to result in students’ achievement of specific knowledge and skills and the application of knowledge (Kopera-Frye, Mahaffy, et al., 2008).

To start with, all curriculum must address the practice or vocational standards or competencies as defined by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Each program taught at a PSE comes with a well-defined set of competencies to be met at the end of the program. Competencies are described as a list of capabilities that the graduates have to achieve before they can graduate from the program. Each PSE is responsible for developing a unique and efficient program to meet these competencies. To that extent, PSEs develop a curriculum for each of the programs they are teaching.

Conestoga College supports all of their curriculum by a framework of I$^4$ approach. The four “I” pillars are Intentional, Integrated, Impactful and Interprofessional. Each one of these pillars is fundamental to the development of the overall curriculum and the subsequent design of courses, learning strategies, and evaluation practices. Content and courses provide intentional learning, which is integrated over the duration of the entire program. Content is presented from an interprofessional perspective and is designed such that it is impactful; it is making a difference in the learning of the student. Naturally, curriculum undergoes ongoing refinements and updates, based on changing practices and emerging knowledge in the field and requirements of program competencies. In addition, each program undergoes a major program review every five years, with valued input from key stakeholders and a program advisory committee to ensure the program meets the needs of the workforce.

The curriculum taught in our LC is the PSW program as designed by Conestoga College. This program consists of a two-semester integrated learning curriculum, including a community and LTC experiential learning experience. Within the PSW program, students receive theoretical and clinical content, enhanced by intentional case studies and integrated learning.

Content covered in the PSW program includes:

- strong knowledge of all aspects of care and service provision for older adults and their families;
- the understanding of aging as a continuum with varying abilities and needs; and
- the ability to recognize and respond to an older person within a social context of life.

“Informal and formal engagement with residents and staff create this unique learning experience. I look forward to the Annual Program Reflection process with my colleagues at the main Doon Campus to share current care practices at University Gates and new resources for learning in curriculum for all PSW and PN students.”

— Sharon Clarke, Living Classroom Coordinator, Conestoga College, the Village at University Gates
For the PSW program that is delivered in the LC, additional integrated experiences are added to promote the experiential learning within a LTC setting. A few of these experiential learning assignments are found below:

• ‘My Story’: Each student is teamed up with a volunteer resident. The student meets the resident a couple of times and then traces the resident’s hands on a piece of paper and discusses meaningful events in the resident’s life. The student then visualizes those events on the drawing through words, pictures, colours, etc. The end result is presented, together with the resident, to the group of students and LTC home teams. This activity aims to promote the student’s interpersonal communication with older adults, emphasizes the life experiences that older people bring to the LTC home and the importance of resident-centered care, and introduces the beginning principles of reflection on one’s own values and experiences. For the residents, this activity provides a welcome opportunity to reminisce and share their life story. Team members enjoy this activity because they might learn something different about the resident or they might be reminded of an important event in the resident’s life that they had forgotten. This activity is often conducted at the beginning of the program, to familiarize students with the residents, the LTC team and the home.

• ‘The Culture Fair’: Students are asked to organize a culture fair, representing the country of origin of the residents, the LTC team, and their fellow students. Displays are designed with the help of the residents and the fair is held on Mainstreet in the Village. On the day of the culture fair, students and residents represent their country, music, food, and any other important fact. Other residents, families, and team members visit the culture fair and share their experiences. The overall aim of this activity is to help the students understand the importance of ‘knowing the person’ to get to the concepts of resident-centered care.

• ‘Walk a Day in My Shoes’: For this activity, the students are asked to observe different team members in the LTC home for several hours. PSW students observe nurses, PSWs, housekeepers, recreational therapists, dietary aides and so on. Team members are asked to explain their roles and contributions. The overall purpose of this activity is to help students to understand the interprofessional roles, teamwork and dynamics, and effective communication skills, including transfer of accountability and reporting.

“In a LC, there are lots of new learnings from the Village of Riverside Glen teams and resident and family interactions. All of this can be incorporated into the curriculum and program delivery approaches.”

– PSE faculty
**Building Block 9: Define Communication and Coordination Mechanisms**

This building block refers to the process of informing all stakeholders on a regular basis to make sure that important information is exchanged on a timely basis to help organize, implement and evaluate all LC processes, resources, and services to sustain a successful LC.

From our LC experience, we value and encourage open and ongoing communication. In the LC, we have several team meetings, as well as ad hoc meetings when needed. During these meetings, resident and family councils, PSE faculty and the LTC team are included. These groups all have important contributions to make during the LC implementation and consultation meetings so it is important that everyone’s input is considered.

There are two pathways by which communication and coordination take place: formally and informally.

The formal channel of communicating and coordinating takes place between those stakeholders with decision making authority or information items that need to be documented or communicated in an official manner. In general, this type of communication provides structure, rules and accountability. Communications can be vertical and horizontal, as shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Communication Process*
The informal channel of communicating and coordinating does not follow any prescribed or official rules or procedures. Information moves freely in all directions. In any organization, this type of communication is very natural as people interact with each other about what is important at the time. Quite often, we informally communicate through emails, face-to-face conversations, and phone calls. Most of these informal conversations take place when discussing space requirements, ordering equipment for the LC and planning out our SOPs (refer to building blocks 4 and 6).

Below we describe some of the formal and informal communication vehicles we found useful in the LC.

**Student Orientation**
Orientation is more than simply telling people a few facts about the LC. Rather, it is an activity that is planned, introduces different people, and combines information, experiences, and a translation of the values and culture of the LC. The goal of an orientation is to provide students with the foundational information to learn well, and to integrate themselves into the LC initiative. In addition, an orientation brings a community together, where each and every individual is given a sense of belonging and recognition prior to starting their LC journey. Therefore, it is important for a LTC home and a PSE to collaboratively plan and host the orientation so everyone feels welcomed and on board with the LC mission.

**Handbooks and Newsletters**
Handbooks and newsletters serve as another strategy to communicate and connect people. Handbooks and newsletters are important written materials because these documents share information with various people about the LC. Furthermore, these handbooks and newsletters are useful resources when people need to remind themselves or others of LC commitments, goals, and expectations. Our collaboration works with the following written materials:

- **Program handbook** – includes information about the PSW program at the LC, the resources available to students, professional code of conduct, health and safety regulations and requirements, and information about the collaboration between the PSE and the LTC home. An example of our Student Handbook can be found online through the Conestoga College website (www.conestogac.on.ca).

- **LTC team handbook** – includes information on communication policies, performance evaluations, working with family and residents’ concerns, confidentiality policies, media policies, workplace violence policies, health and safety policies, social committee, and WSIB training.

- **Resident handbook** – in addition to information about living at the Village, this handbook includes information about the collaboration between the LTC home and the PSE and the LC activities and events. Often, this handbook is given to residents and families upon admission to the LTC home.
• **Volunteer handbook** – includes information about the role of volunteers, the Resident Bill of Rights, volunteer rights and responsibilities, the general safety rules and health policies of the LTC home, and codes of conduct.

• **Newsletter articles** – are provided monthly so that residents and families, students, PSE faculty, and the LTC team and the community are aware of the activities and events taking place in the LC.

### Scheduled Meetings
Scheduled meetings are a formal way of communicating and coordinating the LC. Scheduled meetings serve the purpose of keeping everyone up-to-date on the current issues and status of the LC. From our experience, we hold scheduled meetings between the PSE and LTC home to discuss the following topics:

- **Keeping residents and family members engaged in the Living Classroom** – Meetings are scheduled so that the PSE faculty and the LTC team can discuss opportunities to invite and engage residents and families in LC activities. Residents and families can participate in conversations with students in public spaces (i.e., café, Mainstreet, and resident rooms), assisting students with assignments, participating in classes either as a teacher or a learner, and providing feedback about student involvement in placements.

  Resident and Family Councils are valuable mechanisms for engagement about the LC. Building relationships is an important part of the LC Program Coordinator’s and General Manager’s responsibilities.

- **Planning and coordinating specific activities in the Living Classroom** – Several meetings are scheduled to discuss how the LC team (faculty, LTC team members) respond to and follow through with requests and commitments for the LC initiative. For example, day-to-day coordination of students in the LC is discussed with the LC Coordinator and the LTC lead. The LC Coordinator and the LTC lead meet regularly to discuss the plans per semester and develop a schedule outlining when students will visit or participate in the LTC home.

> “The opportunities for students to be part of a LC have provided many students with a chance to observe and participate with health care professionals and residents. Many qualities of providing exceptional care are apparent when it is demonstrated or observed rather than just reading it in a textbook or practicing it in our clinical skills lab.”

– Marilyn Arsenault, Program Application Specialist, the Village at University Gates in Waterloo, January 7, 2015
Extension of environmental services in the Living Classroom – From a practical perspective, meetings are scheduled to discuss how best to report and respond to any maintenance concerns between the PSE faculty and the LTC team. Housekeeping, accessibility to washrooms, appropriate signage, or concerns with parking all required a few ad hoc meetings so that these issues and concerns could be addressed in a timely manner.

Monitoring student adherence to infection control and health safety procedures – It is important that the LTC team and the PSE faculty meet regularly to inform each other of communications in the event of an infectious outbreak. Students and faculty members must adhere to infection and health safety procedures in the LTC home. Moreover, these infection and health safety procedures need to be disseminated to each new cohort of LC students. Health and safety procedures include:

- What to do in case there is a fire in the building?
- What to do in the event of a facility-wide outbreak in the LTC home, where Public Health deems it necessary to close major sections of the home or the total facility for non-essential services?
- What are the LTC home infection control policies and practices?

Volunteering and coordination of formal placements within the LTC Home – Students in the LC are recommended to apply for volunteer positions in order to gain valuable experience by engaging with different residents and team members. Similarly, the LTC home provides regular clinical placements to all its LC students, but also to other programs and schools as well. This practice ensures that the LTC home is seen as a resource for workforce development beyond the LC students. The number of students completing placements at any point in time in the LTC home is determined through meetings between the LTC team and the PSE Office for Clinical Placements. Students who are seeking to gain experience outside of the LTC home are able to carry out practicums in other health-related organizations such as hospitals, acute care, hospices, home care agencies, and community care settings.

Community connections – Scheduled meetings are useful when planning activities and celebrations that connect the community with the LC. Building community connections promotes meeting new people who share similar interests in the care for older adults and the LC initiative. Guest speakers from community agencies and older adults from the community expand the breadth and depth of the learning experience for students, but also for the LC faculty and LTC team. Spaces used by the LC during the day can be made available to other groups during evenings and weekends.

“The students bring their experiences back to the classroom and share learning as it comes up in theory. For example, when we were learning about a tub bath in theory class, some PSW students had already observed a resident taking a bath in the home and were able to share tips with the rest of the class. What the textbook says offers a foundation, but students benefit from having ‘real-world’ experience that allows them to start problem solving early-on.”

Sharon Clarke, LC Coordinator, Conestoga College, the Village at University Gates in Waterloo, September 23, 2015
Promote and Sustain the Living Classroom

**Building Block 10: Promote and Sustain/Expand Value**

Investment and opportunities do not stop once the LC is up and running. Rather, the focus of the work shifts from development and implementation to promoting the LC, sustaining momentum, and building on that base for continuous innovation and quality improvement.

This building block describes four strategies to promote and maintain the momentum of the LC:
- promote the LC and develop strong connections with community organizations;
- monitor success of the LC and leverage shared learning opportunities to understand how to build on strengths;
- examine potential to grow; and
- expand the LC concept to other programs.

Each of these strategies is described below using examples from our own experience.

**Strategy 1: Promote the Living Classroom and Develop Strong Connections with Community Organizations**

Promoting the LC within the community is an important strategy to inform others about this unique learning opportunity, especially towards increasing student enrollment, expanding student placements and enhancing staff team recruitment for LTC as well as community care. Promotion of the LC is important to:
- inform prospective students of innovative learning opportunities;
- create opportunities to build new relationships;
- provide workforce development strategies for the LTC sector;
- enhance the reputation of the LTC and the PSE; and
- differentiate the LTC home and the PSE from others.

When considering an active promotion strategy for the LC, the following steps might be helpful:

**Step 1**: Determine the importance and benefits of the LC.

**Step 2**: Identify the target audience (i.e., high school graduates, residents and families, LTC homes, PSWs, etc.). Each group will require a different approach.

**Step 3**: Articulate the messages to be shared with the target audience.

**Step 4**: Determine the timing of the promotion.

“**Forecasts predict there won’t be enough staff to meet the health care needs of our growing aging population. From our experience, Living Classrooms are a successful workforce development strategy to address this upcoming challenge. We are experiencing increasing student interest for the Living Classroom programs and have more graduates seeking employment in LTC. I’m optimistic that Living Classrooms are heading us in the right direction.”**

– Mary-Lou van der Horst, Director (2013-2016), Schlegel Centre for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care
Step 5: Identify the communication/media channels you would like to use to promote your LC.

In our experience, we have used several communication strategies:

• the PSE course calendar;
• the PSE and LTC website;
• PSE/LTC recruitment fairs;
• Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube;
• physical bulletin boards and signage along busy intersections and on the LTC site;
• brochures and newsletters;
• through PSE and LTC professional organizations;
• by attending conferences (i.e., presentations, booths);
• radio advertisements;
• fundraising; and
• online webinars.

Step 6: Evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the promotional strategies.

Once the above steps have been discussed within your collaboration, a promotion plan needs to be developed. A promotion plan is a tool used to document and track all promotional activities and successes. Several excellent resources and tools are available to help you develop a promotion plan.

Developing a Promotion Plan – Resource List

- Canada Helps, Creating a Communications Plan That Works!

- Funds for NGOs, A Free Guide on ‘How to Create a Communications Plan for Your NGO’
  https://www2.fundsforngos.org/featured/a-free-guide-on-how-to-create-a-communications-plan-for-your-ngo/

Developing networks with community organizations is critical to ensure shared values and to sustain the LC.

- Our Canadian health care system depends on inter-agency cooperation, communication and collaboration. Community connections within the LC are essential to promote these relationships and collaborations and ensure that the LC is a community resource.
- On a practical level, effective relationships with community organizations are critical to manage student placements during infectious outbreaks in LTC homes, since an outbreak in one setting impacts the students’ learning and travel across sites and at the LC. Community connections can be developed through outreach by the LC Coordinator as well as by holding open houses and events at the LC.

Presenting LC experiences at conferences is another opportunity to share experiences. For example, on November 9, 2015, we presented at the Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation (CLRI) conference in Ottawa, Ontario. The presentation discussed the design of the LC, the curricular programs in the LC, and evaluation. This is one example of promotion, where other LTC and PSE organizations interested in the LC can receive information and engage in discussion about the LC concept and its implementation.
**Strategy 2: Monitor Success of the Living Classroom and Leverage Shared Learning Opportunities**

Evaluation is an important component of every educational program as it identifies the program’s strengths and opportunities for growth. Structured evaluation measures the impact of the LC on its students, stakeholders, the community, the faculty, LTC team members, residents and families. An evaluation plan supports the collaborating organizations to monitor the progress towards the organizational goals and identify areas for improvement. An evaluation plan can also provide a framework for communication to inform the various stakeholders of the values of the LC, justify the need for further funding and support, and empower all to continue working towards the organization’s desired goals and outcomes.

When making decisions about promoting and sustaining the LC, it is important to understand what processes are contributing to the program’s success, and how these processes could be improved in order to promote additional positive outcomes. This is done through the use of formative evaluation (i.e., process evaluation). A summative evaluation (i.e., outcome evaluation) is used to demonstrate the long-term outcomes of the LC. These types of evaluation are described below.

**Formative Evaluation**

Formative evaluation explores how the LC is making progress towards its goals in terms of its inputs and short-term outcomes by asking “what is working, what is not working, and what can be improved?” (Preskill and Mack, 2013). There are many ways to carry out a formative evaluation, including:

- **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices surveys (KAPs)** are used to reveal misconceptions or misunderstandings that could become obstacles to successful implementation of the LC. These surveys can be distributed over the course of a year (i.e., fall semester, winter semester, and spring semester) in any kind of LC program. KAP surveys may be used to identify needs, problems and barriers in program delivery, as well as solutions for improving quality and accessibility of services. All Ontario PSE programs employ the Key Performance Indicator Survey. Information from this survey can be easily used to evaluate student’s perceptions of the LC program.

- **Classroom Assessment Technique (CAT)** is a form of ungraded formative evaluation used by faculty to monitor student learning before and between summative exams or assignments. CATs can be used when seeking just-in-time feedback about the learning process in the LC, to provide information about student learning outside of traditional assignments (i.e., tests, paper, etc.) or help students to become better monitors of their own learning. Results from CATs can guide faculty and LTC team members in fine-tuning their teaching strategies to better meet student needs.

- **Satisfaction surveys** give stakeholders (students, faculty, LTC team, residents, families, employers, etc.) an opportunity to rate their level of satisfaction with the LC. These surveys can be analysed to determine where there are gaps or areas for improvement in the LC. Satisfaction surveys can be handed out weekly, monthly, or yearly, depending on how much information you are looking to attain and if you are looking for a certain trend.
• **Reflection journals** can be used to provide feedback about a program or personal experience in the LC. Students, LTC team members, and resident and families can write these journals at any point in time. Evaluators can review these journals and carry out a thematic analysis to determine common responses or phrases people use to describe their experiences in the LC.

• **Interviews** are a great way for individuals to freely talk about their LC experiences. Interviews can be used to inform decision making, strategic planning and resource allocation.

• **Post-graduate tracking** involves collaborating with the Alumni Office of the PSE to follow graduates from the LC. This method can reveal valuable information to improve the LC, such as:
  - In which settings or sectors are LC graduates employed?
  - In which geographic areas did LC graduates find employment?
  - How soon did LC graduates gain employment?
  - Do LC graduates hold full-time, part-time, or casual employment?
  - Are employers willing to provide feedback on career preparedness of their new hires?

**Example of Formative Evaluation from the Schlegel Village-Conestoga College Living Classroom Experience**
Dr. Veronique Boscart and her colleagues used several formative evaluation techniques to monitor the impact of the LC and to identify areas for improvement. Some of these techniques included focus groups, semi-structured interviews, student knowledge tests, employment surveys, LTC team, residents, and families’ satisfaction surveys, and Visual Analogue Scales to measure relationships. This data gathering has supported the identification of what’s working well, and changes needed to improve satisfaction and overall experience of the LC.

**Summative Evaluation**
Summative evaluation measures if the intended outcomes have been achieved to “judge it all worthwhile” (Preskill and Mack, 2013). There are many ways to carry out a summative evaluation, including an analysis of an annual Return on Investment, reviewing Key Performance Indicators, and reviewing student marks on final exams. Some formative evaluation techniques can also be used for summative evaluation.

**Example of Summative Evaluation from the Schlegel Village-Conestoga College Living Classroom Experience**
Dr. Veronique Boscart and colleagues completed a study called Enhancing Care of Seniors in Long-Term Care: Impact of a Living Classroom on the Education of Personal Support Workers. Using both formative and summative evaluation methods, Dr. Boscart and her colleagues have been able to demonstrate that the LC has had a positive impact.
In addition to learning from the above evaluations, the LC offers a great opportunity to close the gap between PSEs’ understanding of theory and knowledge of LTC practice.

- The Academic Team from the LC has information regarding current LTC practices to share with their colleagues at the main campus.
- Simulated learning scenarios developed in the LC can be added to the curriculum of the program delivered at the main campus or can be integrated in the curriculum for other programs. In this way, new LTC care practices are mobilized into overall health care curriculum. This initiative is currently underway at the Village of Riverside Glen where a knowledge mobilization initiative is incorporating leading practices in culture change in LTC into the PSW curriculum of the LC. These experiences are shared with the overall PSW program at the end of each semester. The next opportunity to share the full cycle of learning, application and translation and influence provincial PSW curriculum will take place at provincial coordinators meetings.
- The learning environment created in the LTC home hosting the LC is a welcoming environment for PSE faculty to collaborate on projects with LTC team members.

As a result of the LC relationships, team members in LTC homes can gain from their PSE by:

- Enhancing adult education strategies and receiving in-service education curriculum; and
- Collaborating on applied research projects, enhancing knowledge and skills to undertake projects to improve practice and create evidence-informed protocols for continual quality improvement.

Taken together, these strategies for mutual learning are one of the most important sustainability engines for a LC since needs and opportunities for new learning are endless. In addition, the rewards of mutual learning are significant to promote improved practices in LTC, create an environment of creativity and inquiry, and respect for each other’s expertise.

“Living Classrooms happen within the complexities of LTC and help students thrive, experience and learn, making them confident, competent and job-ready.”

- Mary-Lou van der Horst, Director (2013-2016), Ontario Centre for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care at the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging

**Strategy 3: Examine Potential to Grow**

From our experience, the LC tends to start out small. However, once the LC picks up momentum and gains a reputation, increasing numbers of students may want to enroll into this program and other programs that are available in the LTC home. As well, additional alliances or community members (i.e., colleges, research organizations, and home care companies) might want to become part of the LC initiative. However, these exciting opportunities do require some strategic planning.

Depending on how fast the LC grows, there may be a point when the LC has reached its maximum capacity. At that time, the organizations have to decide to maintain the LC as is, expand the LC within the same setting, or relocate the LC to a new and larger location.
In 2009, the Schlegel Village-Conestoga College LC started with a PSW program based on the LTC sector workforce needs. The PSW program is a relatively short (two semesters) and straightforward program to deliver. This program also provides endless opportunities for intentionally integrated learning activities. The Schlegel Village-Conestoga College LC was expanded to include a PN program in 2012. The second LC at the Village at University Gates delivers both PSW and PN programming. The PN program at University Gates was a result of transferring the PN program from Riverside Glen. The PN program requires a range of learning resources that are not available in a typical LC. The LC has additional simulation resources which support the PN program, as well as planned continuing education initiatives at this site.

Some questions to consider in contemplating growth of the LC are listed below.

**Assessing the Geographic Area and Target Audience**
- Does your community have more than one PSE (college/university) in your geographic area?
- How many LTC homes, hospitals, community-based service, and home care organizations are in this geographic area?
- How many students are attending college/university in this geographic area? (i.e., is your target market within your geographic area?)
- How many older adults live in this geographic area? How many reside in LTC homes?
- Where are the health care shortages in this geographic area (i.e., LTC homes, community health settings, home care)?
- What municipal zoning by-laws must you be aware of, if moving the LC to a new location?
- Will municipal zoning by-laws support the expansion of the LC?

**Expanding or Extending Your PSE Programs**
- What are the popular or in-demand programs for students?
- What are the most-needed PSE programs that the LC could offer in your area? (i.e., PSW, PN, other).
- What professional development certifications can be offered in the LC (i.e., Gentle Persuasiveness Approaches in Dementia Care/GPA, Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Capabilities, Environment, and Social/P.I.E.C.E.S)?
- Will you increase LC programs per academic year or will you increase class sizes per program intake?
- What program resources/materials will be needed?

**Understanding LTC Needs**
- What skills do LTC homes expect new hires to come with? How can these be included into the LC programs?
- Is LTC experiencing human resource issues? Is there an oversupply or undersupply of job applicants to certain positions?
- Are there plans for LTC home construction or expansion?
- Is there a shift in the LTC sector towards recognizing LCs as a best practice approach to educating the LTC workforce?

**Hiring More PSE Faculty and Training LTC Teams**
- Will you need to hire more PSE faculty once the LC has been expanded?
- Will you need to train more LTC team members?
• What credentials/certification must they possess?

Financial and Legal Liabilities
• Will financial plans need to be changed or updated to meet the new operating costs of the expanded LC (i.e., who will pay for what)?
• What policies and SOPs will be adjusted or redefined (i.e., infection control, safety and security)?
• Will you need to update the formal agreements once the LC has been expanded?
• Will additional liability and insurance be needed?

Physical Changes
• Will additional parking spaces be needed for more students attending the LC?
• What design changes will be needed to make the LC an interprofessional working environment?
• Will additional lockers be needed?
• Is additional storage space needed to accommodate all program materials in the LC?
• Will the LTC home need to implement a centralized student coordination service (i.e., to schedule classroom usage and lab space)?

The majority of these questions were raised when we decided to expand our LC in the Village of Riverside Glen, and when we decided to build a second LC at the Village at University Gates. It took approximately two years for our collaboration to develop plans for the second LC. Although this process was extensive and required further commitments to be made by both organizations, we believe that our shared values, resource commitments, annual planning, mechanisms for coordination, and win-win strategies made the promotion and sustaining of two successful LCs possible.

Strategy 4: Expand the Living Classroom Concept to Other Programs
A last discussion point in the strategy of promoting and sustaining the LC is related to expanding the LC to include other programs beyond the PSW and PN programs currently offered. Our experiences suggest that full implementation of the LC concept is most successful with programs that do not need a range of specialized resources. Certificate programs such as PSW or specialty certificates like Gentle Persuasive Approaches can be delivered with the resources that are typically provided in a LC. It is more difficult to garner the necessary resources for more complex programs such as the PN program. We are able to offer the PN program in a LC format at the Village at University Gates in Waterloo because the Village is supported by specialty resources that are linked to the Schlegel Centre of Excellence for Innovation in Aging. Here, the on-site resources support the PN program and a future vision of growth in continuing and specialty education.

At the same time, the LC philosophy and demonstrated benefits of high engagement between a PSE program and a LTC home have value in creating enhanced experiential learning opportunities for a broad range of PSE programs.

Figure 4 portrays many PSE programs which could benefit from enhanced practice-learning experiences in a LTC home. For example, the Paramedic Program, currently delivered as an on-campus program, could benefit from a couple of weeks of immersive learning. Older adults are the highest users of paramedicine services in Ontario (Stall, Cummings and Sullivan, 2013). Students in the Paramedic Program would benefit from experiential learning as it would allow
for exposure to older adults in LTC settings, including those living with dementia. Paramedic students would also have the opportunity to engage with other health care professionals, which promotes team work and interprofessional communication in the health care workforce.

We have proposed a range of PSE programs that could benefit from exposure to a LC or a LTC home, varying from a brief exposure, to a couple of weeks to an entire program. The examples presented in Figure 4 are not meant to be inclusive, nor will this be necessarily appropriate in every LTC home. Some programs may require short interfacing periods with LTC, while other programs may consist of small groups of students with on-site mentors or preceptors.

*Figure 4: Expanding to Other Programs in the Living Classroom*

The LTC home can engage a variety of different PSE programs. Incorporating these programs within a LC creates an open atmosphere for interprofessional workforce preparation. Students, faculty, community members, and LTC team members (from different disciplines) are able to learn from one another and interact with each other, promoting workforce enhancement. The LC or LTC home can become a community resource centre with services that support community-based care and service delivery. And so, the LC becomes a place of knowledge mobilization for all.
Closing Remarks

From the initial discussions to a fully operational LC, we have asked ourselves if our work in developing, implementing, evaluating and sustaining the LC was worth it. The answer is a resounding yes.

The LC has brought tremendous value to many stakeholders including the students, LTC team members, faculty, and most importantly, the residents and families. Students, faculty, and LTC team members have told us that the LC has had a substantial impact on their personal learning, and desire to work in LTC. Many of the graduates from the LC have gone on to careers working in LTC, demonstrating the capabilities that are directly relevant to the work environment of LTC. Some organizations, including Schlegel Villages, are refining their staffing models to align better with a learning culture that benefits both students and those working and living in LTC.

The gerontology content in all of Conestoga’s programs has been enhanced substantially, with lessons learned in the LC initiative. Not only is Conestoga College producing graduates that have a stronger interest and are better prepared for careers working with older adults, but the college has also established strong professional development and continuing education programs to enhance the skills of those already working with older adults.

We truly believe that the LC has the potential to create a system-wide impact in not only seniors’ health care, but all education of future health care professionals working with a rapidly aging population. It’s our hope that this guide inspires others to embark on a future LC endeavour.

“Together We Learn, Together We Change”
References


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